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HON. PERCY WALKER, OF ALABAMA.

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CENTRAL AMERICAN AFFAIRS;

DELIVERED

24
IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, DECEMBER 17, 1856.



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CENTRAL AMERICA.

The House having under consideration the motion to refer and print the President's Message—

Mr. WALKER said:

Mr. SPEAKER: As I said some days ago, when I first obtained the floor, it is not my purpose to follow in the current of debate of the last eight or ten days. I have no campaign speeches to rehearse. The canvass is over, and the heat and excitement it produced should cease. I would cultivate that freedom from prejudice and that calmness of thought which are essential to wise legislation.

The election has taken place, and I can imagine no good to result from a renewed discussion of the principles which controlled it, or of the motives and conduct of the rival parties. Such a discussion will certainly not affect the policy of the present Administration, and will hardly be looked to by the incoming one as affording reliable guides for its action. At this early day it is impossible for us to anticipate what is to be the result of that election upon the destiny of our country. It may be, sir, that within the next four years the winds of sectional hate which have so fearfully swept over the land may subside, that fanaticism may exhaust itself by its own violence, and that those who have used it for bad purposes may be stranded upon the shores of popular contempt, and the country restored to something like quietness. On the other hand, it may be that the late election was a mere skirmish in advance of a great sectional fight four years hence, on which the issue will be the life or death of the Republic. But be that as it may, I for one am prepared to wait the tide of events, and shall not, if I can avoid it, contribute to party asperity or sectional prejudice.

In this spirit, therefore, I shall endeavor, as far as I can, to lift this House, for a brief season at least, above the turbid pool of party strife, to the consideration of questions of common interest to us all—North and South, East and West—and which, in their importance and magnitude, should address themselves to the minds of all thoughtful men; for in their solution are involved the great

interests, present and future, not only of this country, but of the civilized world. I refer to the Central American States, their present condition, and our relations with them.

In his annual message, now under consideration, the President has called our attention to the posture of affairs in Nicaragua, and informs us that he has ceased to hold diplomatic relations with that State. It is my purpose to comment, at some length, on that portion of the message, and therefore I send it to the Clerk's desk to be read.

The Clerk read as follows:

"The peculiar condition of affairs in Nicaragua in the early part of the present year, rendered it important that this Government should have diplomatic relations with that State. Through its territory had been opened one of the principal thoroughfares across the Isthmus connecting North and South America, on which a vast amount of property was transported, and to which our citizens resorted in great numbers in passing between the Atlantic and Pacific coasts of the United States. The protection of both required that the existing Power in that State should be regarded as a responsible Government; and its Minister was accordingly received. But he remained here only a short time. Soon thereafter the political affairs of Nicaragua underwent unfavorable change, and became involved in much uncertainty and confusion. Diplomatic representatives from two contending parties have been recently sent to this Government; but, with the imperfect information possessed, it was not possible to decide which was the Government *de facto*; and, awaiting further developments, I have refused to receive either."

Mr. WALKER proceeded: The House will recollect that in the month of May last, the President transmitted to Congress a special message, in which he announced the fact that he had recognized the Minister sent hither by what was then the Rivas-Walker Government in Nicaragua. In that paper he set forth at large the reasons influencing him to that act, averring what is doubtless true, that from the foundation of our Republic it had been the invariable custom of all Administrations to recognize foreign Governments *de facto*, without regard to the source of their power or the manner of their creation.

The President then further stated, in addition to this general rule, that there were other and special reasons for recognizing the Government

of Nicaragua, and opening amicable relations with it; that the establishing of such relations was necessary to the protection of the persons and property of American citizens in that country; and that the "interoceanic communication between the opposite shores of America" makes the maintenance of friendly relations between this Government and the Central American States a matter of high commercial and political importance.

Now, sir, let us follow the history of events in connection with this subject, and see whether they justify the discontinuance or stoppage of these friendly relations. It is far from my purpose and my feelings to comment upon the action of the Executive in a captious spirit. I desire to state my views fairly, frankly, and I trust clearly, upon this subject. In my opinion, the Government made a great mistake in the course taken, from beginning to end, upon this whole Central American question. Before I come to an examination of the present posture of affairs in that Republic, I shall call the attention of the House for a few moments to the past history of that country.

We know, sir, that from the time that the broken, irregular shores of Bonaca first greeted the eyes of the adventurous sailor of Castile, at the opening of the sixteenth century, all commercial nations have looked to Central America as affording a passage between the two great oceans—that pathway, in quest of which so many gallant spirits have fallen in the wilderness to rise no more. The bold seamen and valiant captains of Queen Elizabeth sought it with the fervor of religion—the infatuation of romance, through the gorgeous mazes of Central American forests, where hunger, thirst, and fierce tropical heats were the foes that combined with the cruel and jealous Spaniards, and their more wily and ferocious allies, the Jesuits, armed with the power and the terrors of the Inquisition, to guard the way. The Gilberts, the Raleighs, the Drakes, skilled and dauntless soldiers and sailors, gallant, courteous gentlemen, and incomparable scholars, every one found his death either directly or indirectly in the vain pursuit of this same passage, that was to open the doors of El Dorado to the sons of Old England, and place it the brightest jewel in her crown.

We all know, too, the valued lives, the countless treasure which England has dedicated to death and destruction in the terrific seas and deserts of the North Pole in search of a northern passage. Many of her best and bravest sons have perished there from the biting cold, or went down beneath some giant iceberg as it moved along in its sullen progress. But our old mother England pauses not at such loss, and, with the lust for commercial power, still persists in her endeavors.

Look at the position of the Central American States. Cast your eye over the map, and you will find what, to my mind, is a most striking and wonderful fact, that as you travel south, the continent itself seems, in obedience to some great law of nature, gradually to grow smaller and smaller, until, as you approach the Central American States, the waters seem constantly encroaching upon the main land, until, when you have passed the State of Honduras, the waves of one ocean almost touch those of the other, as if the

restless and turbulent Atlantic struggled to clasp in marriage the more peaceful western sea. I say, that from their very position they have been, and must always continue to be, a great object of interest, if not of acquisition, to the leading Powers of the world. Why, sir, sagacious England saw this long before the birth of a Republic on this continent. From the time of the discovery by Spain in 1502—I may say down to this very moment, she has never withdrawn her eye from that point. As far back as 1642 a body of Englishmen, pirates and marauders, in the Island of Jamaica, banded themselves together, and crossed over, and made an inroad upon the possessions of Spain in Central America. It is true they were dispossessed afterwards, I think, in 1650, by the Vice General, as he was called, of Guatemala, but they again and again renewed their attempts at different points—at Grasioz a Diaz, on the Mosquito coast, and that part of Guatemala now called the Belize, and always with the secret connivance of England. They still made successful inroads upon the Spanish provinces; and finally, in 1742, they were taken possession of formally and avowedly by the British Government.

At the end of the war that followed, in 1763, Great Britain entered into a treaty with Spain by which she at once relinquished all right to any portion of Central America, then called Spanish America. But, sir, pursuing that policy of bad faith which stands out upon all her history, she made another descent upon Spanish America; it was, however, afterwards regained, and, in 1783, another treaty was made, in which she, in most emphatic terms, renounced all sovereignty over that soil. In 1786 there was still another treaty, in which she, in yet more emphatic terms, relinquished any such claim. The war of 1796 suspended the enforcement of these stipulations, and in 1814 there was a final treaty entered into between Great Britain and Spain. It is important, sir, that we should bear in mind the language of that treaty, because it has a direct connection with and throws light upon our controversy with England growing out of what is known as the Mosquito coast question. In that treaty of 1814 she not only again recognized the right of Spain to all Central America as paramount and superior to her own, (the House will recollect that this treaty preceded the independence of Central America some nine or ten years,) but in express terms pledged herself to "abandon the continent and all the islands adjacent thereto."

Well, sir, things remained in this state until, in 1821, the States of Central America, viz: Guatemala, Nicaragua, San Salvador, Honduras, and Costa Rica, proclaimed their independence, renounced their allegiance to the Crown of Spain, and afterwards erected themselves into a separate and independent Republic. But, sir, unfortunately for the well-being of that infant Republic, dissensions soon grew up. She lacked a thoughtful and enlightened leader. She had not been thoroughly imbued with the true spirit of republicanism. In 1824 these States formed a constitution modeled after our own, but the peace that resulted from the coöperation of the several States and their union was but short-lived. After the adoption of the constitution dissensions speedily manifested themselves; there were several aspirants

for power, and the result was that the Republic soon fell to pieces.

But, sir, before we come to that, let me recall the recollection of the House to the fact that, before they entered into this formal union, as far back, I think, as December 2, 1822, these embryo States, apprehensive that they might be merged in the larger Republic of Mexico, (which had about the same time severed herself from the Crown of Spain,) as a means of guarding against the efforts of Mexico to absorb them within her limits, and thereby rob them of their independent existence, passed solemn resolves incorporating themselves into the Union of the North American States. This project, of course, passed away upon the adoption of the Constitution of 1824; and, as I have already said, unfortunately there appeared various rival leaders, and in the contests that followed the life of the Republic was crushed out. In 1827, however, it seems that a new ray of hope and promise broke over that distracted land. In one of their intestine wars, a man, who seemed to the patriots to have been born for the crisis and the emergency, was lifted above the vulgar herd of factious spirits. He was no ordinary man, no mere ambitious soldier who presented himself, but a man of large gifts, who, by his wisdom, his caution, the statesmanship he evinced, and the purity of his private character and life, induced the hope, which died out not for many years in that country, that through his instrumentality, by his valor, courage, and skill, peace might be once more restored to them. That man was Morazan, the descendant of a West Indian planter, who had married in Honduras. With great power he swayed the destinies of that country for a number of years; but not even his wise policy and prudent counsels could quiet the discordant elements of that disturbed land, and the several States were constantly engaged in wars.

Some ten years after his advent on the stage of action, a man of opposite elements came forward, of savage instincts, without refinement or cultivation of any sort. Carrera was a fit instrument of a crafty priesthood. He came into notice in 1837, and from that time to the present must be regarded as the evil genius of the entire Central American States. A common herdsman—the “pig driver of Guatemala,” as Squier tells us he was called—was rude, ignorant, and unpolished, of gigantic strength, ferocious passions, indomitable will, and dauntless courage. This man was taken up by the priesthood as the instrument of crushing Morazan, and thus effecting their purposes.

After many a conflict and disaster, now and then relieved by victory, Morazan, defeated and taken prisoner, fell a victim to the vindictive rage of the Carrera faction. After his death, but slight obstacles barred Carrera's way to absolute power; and he now stands, not the President of a republican government, but the Dictator of Guatemala, the chief State of Central America, and the most powerful enemy of the liberal party of Nicaragua.

I have dwelt at some length on the intestine troubles of the Central American States; and I would now add, that the history of those wars and dissensions show throughout the active agency and interference of England; and I think I am jus-

tified in saying that, but for her interference, there would have been at least a chance for a Republic of Central American States. Though Great Britain had abandoned to Spain all right to any portion of Central America, she was so fully aware of the advantages a foothold there would give her in controlling the commerce of the world, that, notwithstanding her disclaimer in 1814 and previously, she was constantly active to secure control over those States. To effect that purpose, she contributed to keep alive the discord of which I have spoken. It is known, and has never been denied, that within the past eighteen months she has supplied the Costa Ricans with arms and munitions, if not with funds, to carry on the war against the Government of Nicaragua, whose Minister was recognized by President Pierce in May last. Her attempted Mosquito protectorate was no measure of philanthropy, but a trick resorted to to insure to herself the control of a transit route.

I have not the time now to review the history of our controversy with England in reference to that matter. I can only glance at it. We know the terms of the treaty commonly known as the Clayton-Bulwer treaty. We remember the date of its promulgation. We cannot forget the aim and purpose of this Government in entering into that treaty. It was promulgated in July, 1850. Yet, not long afterwards, England again asserted her rights over the Bay Islands. If gentlemen will look at the correspondence between the two Governments they will find that England assumed the ground that Central America did not have the ownership of its islands and dependencies; and this in the face of the settled law that discovery carries with it the right of sovereignty. Spain had originally the sovereignty of Central America by reason of her first discovery of that country; and when Central America achieved its independence from Spain, as a necessary consequence the right of sovereignty went with it.

I have mentioned these things to show the great importance of our country having some settled policy with reference to Central America. We know the character of the population of those States? We know that, though they embrace a large geographical area, not much below one million of square miles, they are sparsely populated. There are Indians, mixed races, and foreigners, who have gone there from time to time, forming a most heterogeneous aggregate of inhabitants. Now, from the history of the past, I lay down this proposition: It is preposterous to suppose that a rude, uncivilized, thrice-mixed race can ever have control in those latitudes. The question then resolves itself into this: Either that country must fall in the future into the grasping hands of our great commercial rival, England; or it must, in obedience to what I conceive to be the laws of nature, become, by geographical position, community of interest, and political sympathy, our firm ally. At any rate there must be established a separation between Central America and the great Powers of Europe, so as to insure us the rights to which we are entitled.

I hope the House will not so far misunderstand me as to imagine that I am seeking now to inculcate the idea of annexation. Such is not my purpose. That if our Government lasts our domains will be enlarged, I have no doubt. I am

not disposed to hurry events. I prefer leaving them to the regular order of time. But I would at least afford encouragement to the efforts now making to regenerate the Central American States. I wish to see our Government abandon the policy of stretching our neutrality laws beyond their proper interpretation. And it seems to me that a greater error never has been committed, not only by this, but by past Administrations, than in the course which has been taken in regard to Central America. Why, sir, how do matters stand?

I have spoken of the controversy between ourselves and England on account of their Musquito protectorate, and their well-known assumptions of right to control the fate of that country. I venture the assertion, that although the declaration of James Monroe in 1823, that the interest of this country required that no foreign Power should be allowed to interfere with the affairs of this continent, has received the indorsement and approval of every leading statesman, North and South, since its promulgation, yet the diplomatic history of this Government shows an entire and total disregard of that great doctrine. In my judgment, if there had been a wiser—and by that I mean a bolder and more energetic—foreign policy adopted by this Government, at this very hour we should have upon our southern border a republic affording to us, either by railroads across their narrow isthmus, or by canals, what we so much require and demand. If you take up your tables it will be found that it is only across the Central American States that the oriental markets are really open to us. If you take the distance around the Cape of Good Hope, you will find that England is one thousand seven hundred miles nearer Canton and Calcutta than is the port of New York; while, by a canal across the Isthmus of Nicaragua, the relative position is entirely reversed, and the great fact stands out that there is a diminution of three thousand miles in favor of the American port.

The same is true in regard to the trade with the western coast of South America and the Sandwich Islands. If any gentleman will take the trouble, from these simple data, to calculate, not merely the distance in miles, but the time—for that becomes important in regard to the discovery and application of steam—he will find that it is across these Central American States that we can only expect to obtain full and complete control of our possessions upon the Pacific, and at the same time bring to our own doors the trade of Asia and China. England was aware of this, and hence her unremitting efforts to check our progress to commercial greatness.

Though by the terms of the Clayton-Bulwer treaty, England engaged to protect the construction of, and to maintain the security of property and rights of transit on all railroads, canals, or other contracts of communication from Tehuantepec to Darien, we soon witnessed the subtle turnings of British diplomacy. After the United States were bound to the position that suited her purposes, England managed, before the delivery of her ratification, to dispatch a force to seize the Roatan Islands, and create them into a British colony. These islands belong to Honduras, and are so situated at the outlet of the admirable Isthmus transit across that State, that, with them, a

strong maritime Power could exclude at will our trade and travel through that route to the Pacific. Competent engineers had examined the route, and had reported strongly in favor of the harbors at each terminus; and British policy acted promptly on the suggestion. It was an item in her schedule of antagonism to American progress to seize and keep in her own power the portals of this tempting pathway to California. The movement was exactly timed. If she had robbed an American State of these valuable islands before she had firmly bound the United States, even our meek and much-enduring Government might have taken the alarm, and rejected the treaty. If she ratified it completely before she acted, the proceeding would be too barefaced for even English effrontery. Her Minister is therefore directed to inform our Government, at the last moment, that the treaty "is not to be understood to apply to her Britannic Majesty's settlements of Belize and its dependencies." This word "dependencies" was selected as indefinite enough to cover the premeditated plunder of the Roatan Islands which she was in the act of perpetrating. These islands had never before been called or considered British property, or in any way "dependencies" of the British settlement of the Belize. They were usurped and created into a "dependency" of the Belize, and re-baptized by the name of the Colony of the Bay Islands. Honduras protested indignantly at this open piracy of her territory. She reminded the United States of the Monroe doctrine, and proposed that we should accept her as a State of the Union, and annex her territory at once, rather than see it torn from her piecemeal by England. So stands the matter at the end of six years. England retains the plunder. Our Government barely ventures to whisper a timid dissent; and all Europe may well declare, in tones of undisguised contempt, that the American Union is, after all, but a "noisy braggart, and her doctrine of non-encroachment on American soil mere bluster and bravado." Yet the question at stake is of incomparable magnitude. It is, whether England or the United States shall have the control of the most important pathways, not only of our inter-State trade, but of oriental traffic. The gold discoveries in our extended territories on the Pacific, our bold approach to the mastery of Asiatic commerce, and the general revolution in the channels of trade which steam and American enterprise are turning from its old paths, to lead, by shorter routes, across the American Isthmus, startled the fears of England. She felt her decay was near, when she beheld American ships rivaling and outstripping hers, in tonnage as well as speed and power, on every sea. Her last hope is to forestall her vigorous competitor of the West, by seizing the gates of our invaluable home avenues of commerce, and so retain yet awhile the scepter in her own hands. On this idea she acted when she laid robber grasp on the Roatan Islands, and, in violation of truth, right, and international comity, she took illegal and violent possession of the port of San Juan del Norte, the lawful property of the Republic of Nicaragua.

Sir, we have been recreant to our republican principles in abandoning the Monroe doctrine whenever and wherever it was attacked by Europe, and now the penalty of our dereliction is

being visited upon us in all directions. We have fallen so completely into the habit of non-resistance to European encroachments, that we are almost afraid to oppose them with firmness even in the safe warfare of diplomacy. Our apathy, if not our timidity, has provoked the aggressions growing out of the forced and fraudulent construction of the Clayton-Bulwer treaty. That treaty was a snare and a deceit from the beginning, and only devised to entrap the United States into an engagement never to obtain a foothold on the American Isthmus, while England could go on taking all she wanted. When this duplicity was made evident by the seizure of the Roatan Islands, the treaty should at once have been declared forfeited and void, as an instrument obtained under false pretenses, and signalized by the evasion or denial of all the conditions and equivalents which the United States were induced by diplomatic artifices to believe it contained. Every month that monstrous and suicidal blunder remains uncanceled is a lowering of the dignity of our Government—a cause for the impeachment of its wisdom—a distrust of its courage. But, sir, I cannot longer dwell upon this branch of the subject. The time to which, by the rules of the House, I am limited, is nearly gone, and I must hasten on.

It will be remembered that thus far I have not spoken in reference to the existing state of things in Nicaragua. It is my purpose now to trace, briefly, the current of events in that State for the last few years, the action of our own Government, and the career of General William Walker.

I confess frankly that I enter upon this portion of my subject in a far less hopeful spirit than that which ruled me some days since; because recent intelligence places things in Nicaragua upon a different footing from what I had hoped. But, though at the present time clouds seem to be lowering upon Walker, yet I am one of those who believe in the virtue of the element of self-reliance; and if I read him aright, there is that about him which marks him for a longer and still more brilliant career.

There is, sir, a terrible power in calumny and detraction, which ever treads fast and remorselessly upon the heels of virtue; and where it cannot entirely destroy, disappointment only adds new force and power to its hate. There is no man in our day who has been more maligned than he upon whom, I may now say, the eyes of the world are cast. Walker is no vulgar adventurer, but a profound observer, an earnest, scholarly man, above all mercenary considerations, temperate, grave, courteous, and habitually silent. Secretive and self-reliant, he is not so cautious as you would conceive so thoughtful a man to be, but hurried on occasionally by the impetuosity of genius, as all the master spirits of the world have been.

A young, bold, adventurous, thoughtful man, imbued with the truest spirit of Americanism, the keenest instincts of his peculiar nationality, the brave, enduring pioneerism of the West and South, prompt to the faintest voice of freedom, sallies forth to establish a nationality, to which he would impart, by his own energy, genius, and enthusiasm, the deep love of liberty, industry, morality, and it might be prosperity, of his own happier land. Inspired by that heroic dream of

freedom, and a love of glory which has characterized the purest and noblest natures, he, at the call of the liberal party, then struggling in Nicaragua, entered that State with the small force of fifty or sixty men. This was in June, 1855. For some months civil war had prevailed, the "serviles and the liberals" contending for the ascendancy. Chamorro, the leader of the former, and Castillon, the leader of the liberals, were candidates for the Presidency. Chamorro had usurped the government, and by superior force had confined his opponents within narrow limits. At this stage Castillon, the representative of liberalism, with the concurrence of Salazar and others, invited General Walker, then in California, to aid him in the effort to rescue the country from the grasp of despotism. He did so; and landing at Realijo proceeded to Leon, where the liberal party was stationed. He obtained reinforcements of one hundred and fifty natives, and shortly afterwards marched upon the village of Rivas, which was defended by the whole force of the opposing party. His native allies deserted, and with his little band of fifty or sixty he fought against some four or five hundred. He was not successful in defeating the rival forces; but he gave the most signal and never-to-be-forgotten evidence of his prowess as a soldier. Afterwards he defeated the enemy at La Virgin.

In a short time the whole aspect of affairs was changed. Such was the impulse given the liberal party by this small force, that it soon became evident that full and complete success would crown their efforts. Chamorro and Castillon had died. Walker headed the liberal party, and General Corral commanded the Chamorro faction.

On the 23d of October, 1855, Walker and Corral entered into a treaty at Granada. As a compromise, the treaty declared Patricio Rivas, who had been connected with the Chamorro party, but who had taken no active part in the controversy, Provincial President for fourteen months unless he should decree an election before the expiration of that time. This man Rivas was at the time collector at the port of San Carlos, at the head of the San Juan river, and although he held that post under Chamorro, yet, in the hope of restoring peace and quiet, Walker consented that he should occupy the highest place in power, and he was accordingly proclaimed President of the Republic. Rivas afterwards issued a decree for an election of President by the people; but before it took place, he and Corral left the capital and set to work to overthrow the Government. A short time after entering into the treaty, Corral was detected in treasonable correspondence, and was shot, as he deserved to be, by Walker's orders. Walker was elected President by the people.

Before the breach between Rivas and Walker occurred, to wit: in November, 1855, the new Government was recognized by our Minister, Mr. Wheeler; and in May last our Government received Padre Vigil, the representative of the Rivas-Walker Government. It is known that at that time there were protests made against this recognition. But from whom did these protests come? Not from any party claiming to be the ruling power in the State of Nicaragua, but from some of the other and hostile States of Central America. Mr. Josaari, who, if I mistake not,

is the Minister from Guatemala, and who also claims to be the present representative of Rivas, protested, a few months ago, against the recognition of Padre Vigil, and in his protest alleged that "there is not either in the United States, or any part of the world, any body who is not aware that Señor Rivas, who styles himself as President of Nicaragua, is nothing but a creature of Walker—the complacent slave to the ruler of his country."

And yet this denunciator of Rivas comes now, if I have not been misinformed, and claims to be the Minister to our Government from Rivas.

In his annual message to this session, the President employs language which by many is regarded as a statement that diplomatic relations with Nicaragua ceased with the departure of the Padre Vigil from this country. If this be so, a large portion of the public has been misled. It has been publicly declared that the Government held official communication with Mr. Heiss, who was left in charge by the Padre. Walker was elected President on the 13th of July, 1856, and on the 19th of the same month was recognized by our Minister at Nicaragua. Since then, as declared in the public journals, our State Department has had negotiations with the Walker Government for the discharge of American soldiers, and also in reference to what is known as the "privateering" proposition.

Sir, it may have been wise in the President to refuse to continue intercourse with Walker's Government; but it seems to me that the mere fact that this man's fortunes seem momentarily under a cloud should not weigh against the well-established fact that he is at the head of the only party constitutionally authorized to rule in Nicaragua. He represents not only the liberal party in that State—those in favor of legitimate government—but, what is greatly important to us, he is the type and representative of our own nationality. And, in addition to this, the struggle now going on in Nicaragua is not between the people of that State and Walker as an invader, but between Walker, the duly-elected President, and an invading army from the hostile States of Guatemala, Honduras, San Salvador, and Costa Rica, whose object is not merely to crush him, but to exterminate *all* the Americans who have selected Nicaragua as their home.

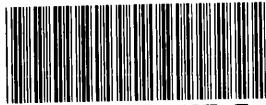
The recognition in May last met with my approval, and I regret exceedingly our Govern-

ment has thought proper to change its policy. The reasons urged for the change are, in my judgment, insufficient. After the recognition in May, our political and commercial interests required that our Government should have afforded every encouragement to the new one in Nicaragua. Cordiality on our part would have gone far to have insured to it permanency and stability. If the United States had acknowledged the Rivas-Walker Government immediately upon its formation, in all probability peace and order would have been maintained; the election for President there would have passed off quietly, and Walker might now be the head of a Government whose course he would shape after our own, and whose destinies he would endeavor to link with those of this Union—not by the absorption of Nicaragua into our Confederacy, but, in a just estimate of the value of geographical relations, mindful of the value of republican principles, and true to his American instincts, would aid us in our reach after commercial sway.

Our clock tells me that my time is nearly out, and I cannot speak fully upon this subject. I have been much hurried, and have perhaps achieved nothing more than to call the attention of the House and the country to matters of great moment to us—matters demanding the calm examination of all thoughtful men in this country. If we are to afford no countenance or encouragement to the efforts being made there to establish a Government in Central America, based upon the principles of our own, it seems to me, sir, the day will come when, in spite of ourselves, the whole power and control of that country will not only pass from our hands but will go into the hands of those whose interests are antagonistic to our own.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I beg to assure the House that, in broaching this subject and advocating the claims of President Walker to your respect and confidence, I am in no wise influenced by his late decree authorizing slavery in Nicaragua; for, sir, however convinced I may be of the inevitable destiny of the negro to a condition of servitude, and of the adaptation of the soil of Central America to slave labor, I am willing to leave it to the laws of nature, to be governed by climate and soil, and the "eternal fitness of things." At any rate, my advocacy of a change in our policy towards those Central American States has been in no wise influenced by that decree.

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